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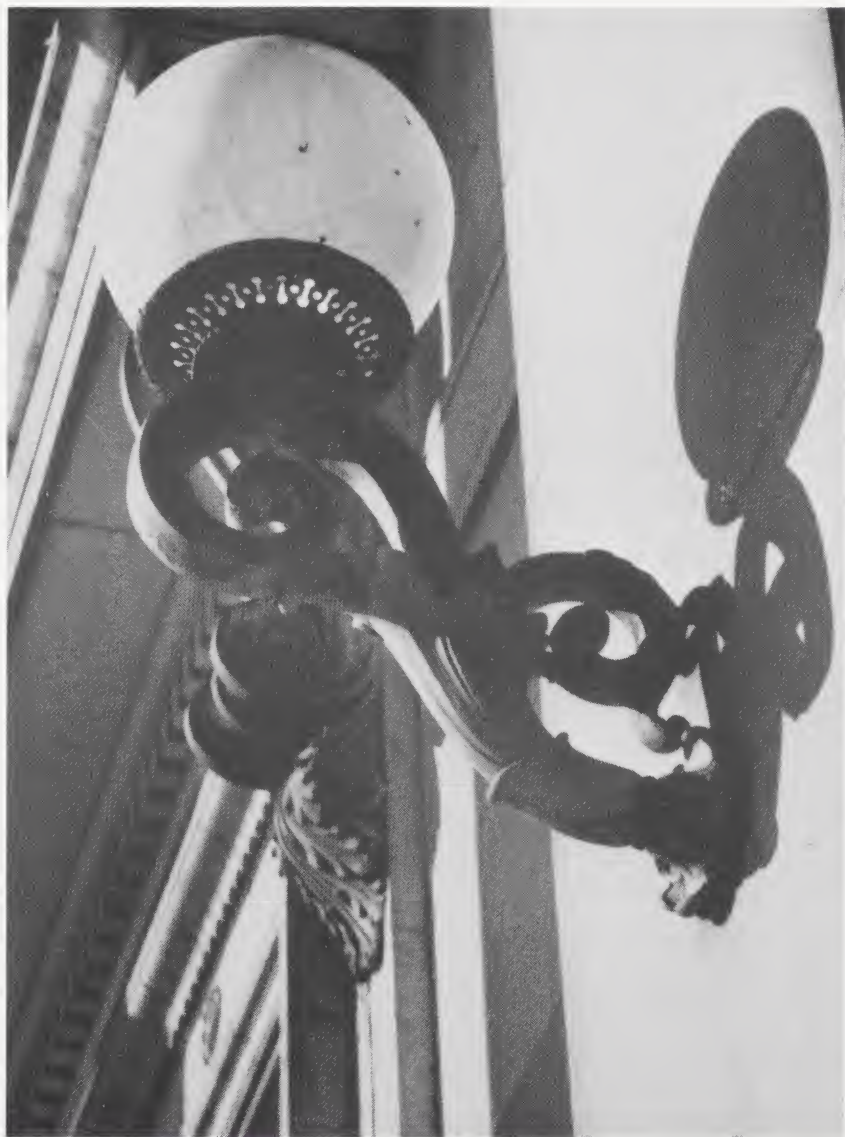
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## COLUMBIA LIBRARY COLUMNS

THE AUTUMN 1997 ISSUE | MICHAEL STOLLER, EDITOR

This fall issue of *Library Columns* features two articles about two very different personalities, each of whom was briefly associated with Columbia. Rockwell Kent studied in the School of Architecture for several years in the early years of the century and then went on to an important career as a painter, engraver, lithographer, and illustrator. But his success as an artist was only one dimension of this unique individual, who worked as a lobster man on the Maine coast, sailed the waters of Tierra del Fuego, lived in Greenland, and went through three wives. Jake Wien, who has written widely on Kent's life and art, has drawn upon the artist's "letters of desire" in Columbia's Rare Book and Manuscript Library, providing us with an extraordinary glimpse into Kent's "daily life and intellectual sustenance," what Wien calls "a map of his shifting emotional terrain." Like Rockwell Kent, Dwight Eisenhower was only at Columbia for a short time, serving as the University's president from the end of 1948 until he left for the White House in January of 1953. It was a moment in Columbia's history some contemporaries hoped would be the beginning a new, golden era for the University. It was also a presidency many in later generations would look back on as a colossal error, an inexplicable interlude, when the Trustees chose a leader who knew little of the institution, its faculty, its mission, and its needs following the disastrous last years of Nicholas Murray Butler's reign. Travis Jacobs, whose youth was intimately associated with the University and its leaders during those years, provides a fascinating account of the little-known circumstances that led to the Trustees' choice of a retired army commander as Columbia's thirteenth president.



F o x I s l a n d .

October 9<sup>th</sup> 1918.

Sweetheart :-

It is bright starlight out of doors ! Soon, soon, if only the weather holds clear and undisturbed my letters go to you and you come to me . You write to me continually do you not ? Write write write . I do my best for you and I am busy beyond anything that you can picture . Think of my days here - cooking, sewing and spinning wool, felling trees, clearing the forest, carrying water, leading to Rockwell, writing my diary, my letters ; and beside all that the great work that I have come here for, that which should, and, in spite of all else I do almost does, occupy all my thought . I'm sure quite rid of the fear that smothered, dear sweetheart . You'll grow warmer . Think of the fine steamer that comes here and of the fine times I go to Seeward and back.

FIG. 1: Kent's log cabin on Fox Island. Ink drawing heading Kent's letter to Hildegard from Fox Island, Alaska, October 9, 1918. Rockwell Kent Collection.

HIS MIND ON FIRE:  
*Rockwell Kent's Amorous Letters to Hildegarde Hirsch and  
Ernesta Drinker Bullitt, 1916–1925*

JAKE MILGRAM WIEN

"A great piece of paper . . . is as stimulating as a great canvas; my thoughts become magnificent and brave."

Rockwell Kent to Ernesta Drinker Bullitt, 1924<sup>1</sup>

Rockwell Kent, voyager to and painter of remote places, conquered the desire brought on by the distance and silence of isolation through the writing of letters. Over the course of a lifetime, Kent would put pen to countless pieces of stationery, committing to posterity his innermost thoughts, some "magnificent and brave," some not. Letter writing also provided Kent with a means of temporal escape to a romantic world of his own construct. For much of Kent's midlife (his mid-thirties to mid-forties), the *letter of desire* occupied a strategic place in the arsenal of his heart.

The two primary recipients of his amorous letters during these years were, first, Hildegarde Hirsch ("Hildegarde"), and, several years later, Ernesta Drinker Bullitt ("Ernesta"). Against the backdrop of his weakening first marriage, Kent sent his *inamorata*<sup>2</sup> accounts of his frequent daydreams and nocturnal yearnings, some of which he characterized as "little interludes for love making."<sup>3</sup> Since 1995 these letters and cards, over 180 in all, have enriched the largely unmined materials that comprise the Rockwell Kent Collection of Columbia's Rare Book and Manuscript Library (the "Rockwell Kent Collection"). Together with the original sources of his artwork—hundreds of preliminary sketches, drawings and proofs in the Rockwell Kent Collection—the handwritten correspondence contributes to an understanding of his larger artistic vision. The amorous



letters, in particular, provide reliable documentary evidence of the artist's daily life and intellectual sustenance and a map of his shifting emotional terrain. They are invaluable pieces of the puzzle that is Kent—a life and achievement no full biographer or art historian has attempted to reconstruct because the pieces are so numerous and scattered.

Some of the amorous letters are visual gems, stunning in their impeccable penmanship and often sprinkled with inventive, light-hearted pen and ink drawings. They are not uncharacteristic of the high standards this Columbia-trained architect and draftsman maintained. Most are on high-quality, watermarked stationery, a few accompanied by envelopes bearing canceled stamps. Their tender charm and intelligent wit partly account for their having been safekept to resurface some seventy to eighty years later. Though there is in Kent's seductive entreaties, as there is in the genre of the love letter generally, a dull predictability—a facility with which he composes his sweet talk, the monotony of the superlative, and the repetitive pleas for reciprocated physical love—the quality of spontaneity is pervasive. The intrigue with which he sends his secret letters and the delirious urgency with which he shares his inconsolable sensual feelings demonstrate the generally less self-conscious nature of the letters.

The letters paint an elaborate picture of Kent the ardent romantic in quest of the one, profound, timeless love. He articulated his aspirations with grandiosity: He hoped his love for Hildegard would contribute to the “love story of mankind” and would serve “as an inspiration to all lovers of the true and beautiful: Dante and Beatrice, Shelly and Mary Godwin, Wagner and Mathilde Wesendonck, Rockwell and his Hildegard.”<sup>4</sup> The infinity sign would close a few of his letters to Hildegard, as would a reverse “E” joined with an “R” symbolizing Ernesta and Rockwell bound in love together (as well as Ernesta Regina) in his letters to Ernesta.<sup>5</sup>

Astonishingly, Kent found his one true and eternal love time and time again. Early in his first marriage, the sincerity of his quest was tarnished by the birth of a child out of wedlock,<sup>6</sup> though Kent claims to have searched “hard” with Kathleen “for the Great Happiness.”<sup>7</sup> After Hildegard and Ernesta came Frances and Sally, his second and third wives. And midway through his marriage to Frances came Salamina, his devoted Greenlandic housekeeper and companion, after whom he named his published Greenlandic memoirs of 1935.<sup>8</sup>

Kent's pursuit of the grail of perfection in love filled his life with passion just as paint filled the void of his canvas. But once having found his erotic fix, Kent initiated a cycle invariably turning toward disillusionment and



blame. His emotionally charged letters to his *inamorata* reveal a troubled soul afflicted with a tangle of desires, emotional imbalances, and feelings of inadequacy.

### Letters to Hildegarde Hirsch

Most of the newly-accessioned correspondence—some 162 letters and cards—were written to Hildegarde, perhaps Kent's most enduring *inamorata*. Kent, then thirty-five years old and the father of four children, nonchalantly picked her up on the corner of 41st Street and Seventh Avenue in the summer of 1916. He memorializes this chance encounter in his autobiography, where he disguises her identity (in order to protect her) as "Gretchen."<sup>9</sup> The young Hildegarde had come from Germany to New York City where, the letters reveal, she performed as a dancer in the Ziegfeld Follies,<sup>10</sup> and on at least one occasion at the Apollo Theatre, where Kent sent her a gift.<sup>11</sup> During some of her stay in New York City, she shared an apartment with two German girls, including a Miss Kohler and, at times, Frieda, to whom Kent refers as "sister," perhaps Hildegarde's younger sister.

The provenance of the Hildegarde letters is intriguing. Upon her death around 1960, the letters and artworks were inherited by her nephew, who in the early 1980s sold them. (Hildegarde left no direct descendants; though she may have been in a marriage prior

to her meeting Kent, it apparently ended, and she never remarried.)<sup>12</sup> More than 160 of the Hildegarde letters were eventually purchased by collector Frederick R. Koch, "the reclusive scion of a Kansas oil family,"<sup>13</sup> placed in his Sutton Place Foundation, and made available to researchers. Koch anonymously sold much of his Kent holdings, including the letters, at Christie's East on May 24, 1995. The letters then entered the Rockwell Kent Collection.

On the level of strict documentation, the letters provide a chronology of the nomadic existence of Kent and his family from 1916–1921. In New York he divided much of his time between his home on Staten Island (1262 Richmond Terrace, West Brighton), his studio apartment (No. 7—their "little house"), to which Hildegarde apparently had a key,<sup>14</sup> his place of part-time employment at Ewing and Allen Architects or George S. Chappell Architect (101 Park Avenue), and, as of September 1917, his studio at No. 23 West 12th Street. His wife and young children moved from Staten Island to Monhegan Island, Maine, to the Connecticut shore, and to Arlington, Vermont, where they lived in a barn and cooked outdoors before their farmhouse was built.

### The Early Letters, 1916–1918

Much of the early correspondence with Hildegarde is written on stationery headed by

a 3/4 inch square mark printed in black depicting a naked man hugging a resting deer. Kent created this mark especially for Hildegard, and the deer motif recurs on the Jewel Box and other artworks presented to Hildegard. He adored this stationery: "I love to lay a sheet of our paper before me and see us two clinging together in the starry night. Oh wonderful Hildegard!"<sup>15</sup> Kent referred to Hildegard as the "half wild, only half conscious deer."<sup>16</sup> This portrayal of the spirit life of animals confirms Kent's receptivity to folk themes and folk media (including reverse painting on glass) undergoing a revival in Europe (especially Germany) and New York. Kent's friend and fellow Germanophile, Marsden Hartley, also experimented with reverse painting on glass in 1916–1917.

That spirituality could be achieved through the physical beauty and solace of nature and through the adoration of a beloved is the fundamental theme unifying Kent's letters to Hildegard. To reach this higher understanding, Kent's religiosity had evolved away from ritual and convention.

Religion is not the church; it is the ardent, reverent spirit that is more or less in every human soul. . . . see with me how . . . any rule of conduct or life that denies us the love that God has given us is worse than false . . . I have tried and believed so devoutly! . . . For years I

prayed on my knees to the amusement and derision of whoever saw me. Then I went to Maine and, still in my heart a devout believer, came to know the little congregation there intimately. Finally I left the church, not through carelessness but deeply disturbed, and freed by my conscience to tell them in the church the heavy faults I found in their worship.<sup>17</sup>

Often closing with "May God and Rockwell be with you," Kent's letters to Hildegard remain prayerful and the mention of the higher authority frequent:

Hildegard . . . I am growing in wisdom, in strength, in love for you, and in the fear of God, to whom, for your sake and our happiness, I pray so fervently that nature, if there were no God, would, for very pity, make one to hear me and to bless us both. See! I send you the prayer I made the other night and put away.<sup>18</sup>

Another theme pervading Kent's letters to Hildegard is a profound identification with German culture. This is not surprising, as the young Kent was imbued with a passion for German language and literature, particularly its expression in poetry and song. His father had studied at a college in Germany, learned to love the German language, and raised his children to speak German. Kent bonded early on with Rosa, his German nurse,<sup>19</sup> and when

he was thirteen years old, Kent traveled with his maternal aunt Jo to Germany, where they spent several weeks. Kent hoped to imbue his own children with Germanic culture; he brought to Alaska songbooks containing Volkslieder with words in English to teach to his young son.<sup>20</sup>

America's anti-German fever after 1914 did not diminish the fires of Kent's Germanophilia or his "insane" passion for German women.<sup>21</sup> Throughout his letters Kent devotedly incorporated the poetic lyricism of Heinrich Heine's German verse. Kent identified with Heine's fairy-tale fantasy and Romantic literary imagination provoking the soul to aspire to greater emotional depth and intensity. As with Kent's love letters, Heine's poems resonate with physicality and erotic ardor. Kent also seized any opportunity to mention to Hildegard whatever German cultural leanings his acquaintances might have, and the instances that he would dine in New York at, for example, the Kaiser Keller.

Hildegard became a model and a muse for Kent. In late 1915, a year prior to their initial encounter, Kent began submitting fanciful, often irreverent ink drawings to *Harper's Weekly*, *Puck*, and *Vanity Fair* to supplement his income as an architectural renderer. In these drawings, especially his outdoor idylls conveying the beauty and wonder of the natural world, Kent began to feature Hildegard.<sup>22</sup>

Kent's sense of artistic integrity rendered him incapable of taking his fashionable ink drawings to heart. He hid behind the alias signature, "Hogarth Jr.," to avoid sully his budding reputation as a great painter of land and sea. To Hildegard, Kent mocked his own creations:

My drawing is finished and looks just as slick and commercial as if the maker of it had possessed not one atom of brains to trouble him. I look at it with pride and amazement—and shame. Oh God—that a man at thirty five—with all the wisdom and brains that I have—be making these fool things!<sup>23</sup>

Again, Kent lamented:

I went to see Crowninshield—the arch enemy of all sturdy women—for he always urges me to make mine thin and long and very silly!<sup>24</sup>

Yet Kent did take pride in having successfully gained commissions over his fellow artists/cartoonists. He boasts, for example, at "having beaten Boardman Robinson."<sup>25</sup>

In late 1917 and into 1918 Kent used Hildegard as a model in his reverse paintings on glass. The Rockwell Kent Collection contains numerous preparatory drawings in graphite for the glass paintings, many of which were encased in gilded frames containing vertical mirrors. Most of the glass paintings feature the golden-haired Hildegard amidst



FIG. 2: "Mirror Mirror On the Wall, Who's the Fairest Of Them All." Preparatory drawing in graphite for reverse painting on glass. 1917–1918. Rockwell Kent Collection.

the verdant meadows and mountains of Vermont where "Hildegarten"—the couple's idyllic retreat—would have been. Hildegarte is also the protagonist in the fairy-tale manuscript Kent gave her in the winter of 1917, to which he makes brief reference as the "Hildegartenbuch."<sup>26</sup>

Hildegarte preserved the bound thirteen-page holographic manuscript with ink drawings dated November 6, 1917—*The Jewel, A*

*Romance of Fairyland*. Her nephew inherited it and sold it in the early 1980s. In 1990 the Baxter Society of Portland, Maine, published it in facsimile.

The Hildegarte letters enrich our understanding of the sources of Kent's art, especially his reverse paintings on glass. Kent shares with Hildegarte his affinity for Maurice Maeterlinck's play *Péleas et Mélisande*, a story of young love and death that evokes "how profoundly



wonderful true love is.” He also refers to Maeterlinck’s essay “On Women” and his mystical notion of “true, pre-destined love.”<sup>27</sup> Many of the reverse paintings on glass include flying birds, perhaps inspired by Maeterlinck’s play *The Blue Bird*, which was widely published and read in the United States. Kent shared Maeterlinck’s dramatic intention to show the invisible and express the ineffable in an artistic fashion.

Character flaws surface throughout Kent’s amorous letters, most notably jealousy. Though he is aware of his possessiveness, Kent repeatedly asks for forgiveness for his bouts of temper and moodiness. “Make of the little tactless things I do as little as possible,” he writes Hildegard.<sup>28</sup> He acknowledges his “over-sensitiveness” to her “flirtation” with other men on another occasion.<sup>29</sup> “I don’t justify the vagaries of my moods. I am ashamed of them,” Kent wrote to Hildegard.<sup>30</sup> He believed that his jealousy was the result not of his low self-esteem but of his having too much love and romance for Hildegard.<sup>31</sup> He also confesses his “self-centered” nature and blindness “to the quiet things in others.”<sup>32</sup>

Kent’s flair for the romantic included several references to children with which he and Hildegard would be blessed. He fantasized: “Dream . . . of the dear children we will have”<sup>33</sup> and “may we have three children Tristan, Siegfried and Frieda, as beautiful

as Rockwell, Kathleen, Clara and Hildegard.”<sup>34</sup> To the probable displeasure of his wife, Kathleen, Kent went so far as to give the familiar name of “little Hildegard” to their fourth child, Barbara.<sup>35</sup>

### The Letters from Alaska, 1918–1919

Kent journeyed by train to Alaska with his young son, Rockwell III, and their trip is described in rich detail in some thirty-five letters and picture postcards dating from late July to December 1918. Even though Kent had been contemplating a sojourn in either Iceland or Alaska as early as 1916, he departed only in late July 1918.<sup>36</sup> This is perhaps why Kent, who had rented his house for a year starting in the late spring of 1917, relocated his family to a “little cottage in New London” Connecticut, “on the beach,” and found himself for much of August 1917–July 1918 in Manhattan.<sup>37</sup> From Monhegan Island in the summer of 1917, Kent had written to Hildegard with the hope she would find them an apartment in Manhattan.<sup>38</sup>

The anxiety of separation from Hildegard spurred Kent to commence writing to her soon after he and young Rockwell boarded the westbound Canadian Pacific train. En route, Kent shared the unfolding adventure with shaky hand. From Vancouver the two reached Seattle, where they boarded a boat to Juneau, Alaska. Their arrival in Yakutat was

marked by a good degree of resourcefulness. With nowhere to sleep, the two were put up by the superintendent of the cannery. In darkness they ascended a hill to a cabin, where they encountered four sleeping Norwegian fishermen. There the two shared a plank only two and a half feet wide, with makeshift pillow and few blankets.<sup>39</sup> Clearly, Kent did not know his ultimate Alaskan destination. At first he thought it might be Seldovia, though the Swedish missionary in Yakutat recommended “Night Island” at the foot of mountains some fifteen miles from Yakutat.<sup>40</sup> Only after journeying to Seward did Kent determine Fox Island, with its secluded log cabin, “several peaks over a thousand feet high,” “unexplored forests and caves,” and “mysterious lakes” to be their winter home.<sup>41</sup>

With his son, flute, and paints, Kent reached Fox Island in late August, when he immediately set about to realize his dream. “I work with all my energy, with all my heart; I want success, I want greatness and fame, and I want somehow that these shall contribute to the happiness of you [Hildegarde] and Kathleen and my beloved family.”<sup>42</sup> Kent wrote avidly of his new pioneer’s life in their new home, the desolate log cabin that previously had been inhabited by rabbits. The island’s only other inhabitant—Olsen, the old Swede—tended “two pairs of blue foxes and a nanny goat.”<sup>43</sup> Only a few weeks after having arrived on the island, with the motor for their

boat in disrepair, the Kents pulled themselves to Seward after four a half hours of hard rowing and blistered hands.<sup>44</sup>

Kent kept an intimate diary of his observations and activities while on Fox Island, with the intention that it be bound as a future gift to his co-pioneering son Rockwell III.<sup>45</sup> The diary entries were sent to Kathleen and were published in 1920 as *Wilderness: A Journal of Quiet Adventure in Alaska* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, Knickerbocker Press, 1920). Kent’s aggressive letter-writing campaign to Hildegarde explains why the Kent of *Wilderness* is in constant anguish for the mail boat to arrive—to alleviate the ache of awaiting reply letters from his *inamorata* and to send on more letters to her!

In his first letters from Alaska Kent implores Hildegarde to join him. He plots for her to come as his wife. But he believes that, as his wife, Hildegarde would be called before the Seward draft board, so he suggests that she disguise herself as his sister.<sup>46</sup> By early December, even as he wears the ring she gave him, Kent has a change of heart and writes:

I have chosen to go back to Kathleen and to the children to leave New York and leave it forever maybe and go far into the country somewhere where no other people will be, to live on the least it can be done for and dedicate my time to work without end. I do this of my



own free will. I have no defense. I have not been urged or threatened by Kathleen of whose love I am far from being certain.<sup>47</sup>

Kent's amorous letters provide no insight into any serious political convictions he might have held and seem to confirm—as does the art from his middle years—their absence. In his travels Kent seizes every opportunity to fraternize with Germans (“splendid fellows”),<sup>48</sup> but this is more out of cultural sympathy than defiance against the Allied war effort. As a dutiful citizen Kent presents him-self in Seward for “registration” for the draft (the age had just been increased to forty-five), deferring his physical examination for a future visit.<sup>49</sup>

One learns from the letters to Hildegard that the rolls of canvas Kent had asked her to send to him in Yakutat, Alaska<sup>50</sup> never reached him.<sup>51</sup> This may explain why there are fewer Alaska oil paintings on canvas by Kent that date to 1918–1919 than one might expect, and of those that do exist, many may have been completed between Kent's return to New York in April 1919 and the opening of the exhibition of his Alaska paintings at M. Knoedler & Co. (“Knoedler”) in March 1920.<sup>52</sup> A shortfall in canvas, together with the rotten weather, may account for the prodigious group of accomplished ink drawings Kent created on Fox Island, often inside by the light of a lamp. His prior painting trips

to Monhegan Island and his subsequent painting trips to Tierra del Fuego and Greenland did not produce a comparable group of ink drawings.

Though a half dozen letters to Hildegard survive from 1919, all are written subsequent to the Kents' spring return from Alaska. A few convey the impression of an amicable disengagement and the return to Kent of clothing and belongings from their shared studio. Kent wrote his last letters to Hildegard from his studio (at 139 W. 15th St.) and his family's new Vermont farmhouse (“Egypt”) in Arlington. Five letters from 1920 and a final one from 1921 conclude his correspondence with her.

**George Chappell, Carl Zigrosser,  
Marie Sterner**

Of the many artists, writers, publishers, and galleries with whom Kent collaborated during these years, three in particular are mentioned with relative frequency in the Hildegard letters. Humorist and fellow architect George S. Chappell was perhaps Kent's closest friend. The two shared an irreverent, literary spirit—Chappell composing satirical verse and Kent its visual counterpart in light-hearted, “Hogarth Jr.” ink drawings. *Harper's Weekly*, the *New York Tribune*, *Judge*, and *Vanity Fair* regularly published their collaborations.<sup>53</sup> On one occasion Chappell sent Kent a

check for \$2,000,<sup>54</sup> presumably for published “Hogarth Jr.” drawings.<sup>55</sup> The editor of *Vanity Fair*, Frank Crowninshield, once gave Kent a book to take to Chappell.<sup>56</sup> The two played tennis together,<sup>57</sup> and Chappell often acted as a go-between for Kent, who treated Chappell’s architectural office as a second home and address for reply letters from his *inamorata*.

Carl Zigrosser, Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Rare Books at the Philadelphia Museum of Art from 1941–1963, early on earned Kent’s respect as an intellect and, as director of Weyhe Gallery, became a pivotal promoter of Kent’s career as a printmaker. Kent contributed articles and artwork to “Zigrosser’s little magazine,” a reference to *The Modern School*, the progressive journal of the Francisco Ferrer Association that espoused principles of libertarian education.<sup>58</sup> Zigrosser wrote to Kent in Alaska “regularly and beautifully.”<sup>59</sup>

Marie Sterner was the major catalyst for Kent’s success in the commercial arena. As gallery director of Knoedler, Sterner organized an exhibition of Kent’s Alaska ink drawings in early 1919 and another exhibition of Kent’s Alaska paintings in early 1920. Not only was she Kent’s dealer and devoted promoter; Sterner became as well his confidante, well versed in his “triangle” problems. Kent mentions more than once to Hildegarde how highly Sterner had regarded her.<sup>60</sup> Sterner’s departure “for Europe on May 1st,”

1920,<sup>61</sup> is most likely the “voyage” over water alluded to in a small manuscript Kent dedicated to her in 1920 that was decorated with his ink drawings.<sup>62</sup> Kent writes of Sterner’s Junior Art Patrons of America and his assistance toward organizing its inaugural exhibition in 1921. Kent boasted that one of his paintings occupied “the place of honor” and that all his paintings together “dominate the show”—a sight that naturally gave him great pleasure.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Letters to Ernesta Drinker Bullitt, 1924–1925**

The second group comprises some twenty-one letters written to Ernesta Drinker Bullitt that join a group of nine letters from Kent to Ernesta of the same vintage that are already in the Rockwell Kent Collection. There exist other, uncatalogued Kent letters to Ernesta, including four known to this author in the collection of John Deedy of Rockport, Massachusetts. All the known Ernesta letters date from late 1924 to early 1925.

Ernesta was of an altogether different nature from Hildegarde: wealthy, highly educated, cosmopolitan, and a published writer of distinction. She would marry two distinguished writers—first, the foreign correspondent William Bullitt, and later, the composer Samuel Barlow. Ten years Kent’s junior, she came from a distinguished

Philadelphia family. Her father at one time was president of Lehigh University and her maternal aunt, Cecilia Beaux, a leading portraitist.<sup>64</sup> In her mid-twenties Ernesta accompanied her first husband on his extended tour of Central Europe as a foreign correspondent, just prior to the United States entry into World War I.<sup>65</sup>

In 1924, recently divorced from Bullitt,<sup>66</sup> Ernesta moved into Kent's orbit. How they met or the length of their relationship is somewhat of a mystery. Kent's career was on the rise, with his second autobiographical adventure, *Voyaging: Southward from the Strait of Magellan* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1924), recently published. He was at work on drawings for frontispieces for each of the twelve volumes of the 1925 edition of *Casanova* (*The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt*) and had just exhibited his Tierra del Fuego canvases at Wildenstein Galleries in the spring of 1924.

The Ernesta letters clearly point to many shared interests—the arts and design, horseback riding and jumping, dogs, and southwestern Vermont, where each had a country home.<sup>67</sup> Kent wrote most of his letters from Arlington, Vermont, to Ernesta who, during the week, lived and worked in Manhattan as an interior decorator.<sup>68</sup> Kent referred to their jointly undertaking a job to build and design a Vermont farmhouse for a “Mrs. Bingham.”<sup>69</sup> In another letter to Er-

nesta, Kent wondered aloud: “Do you think we’ll land the job? I have a notion that you’ll be an encumbrance to me!”<sup>70</sup>

The tone of the Kent-Ernesta letters reflects a relationship, as Kent would assess it, of “equal” partners.<sup>71</sup> Kent saw a kindred spirit in Ernesta—her weaknesses and strengths, her likes and dislikes, her loves and hates—all were his.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps Kent admired most her independent, strong-willed temperament and her “fine disregard for established values.”<sup>73</sup> She insisted that Kent stop smoking and chided him for being a “loafer” in his work.<sup>74</sup> What Kent did not admire, however, was the propriety with which she conducted herself. Toward the married Kent she remained circumspect, eschewing his bohemian lifestyle and rebuffing his entreaties to taste “all the great grand stuff of the romantic freedom of today.”<sup>75</sup> She was reluctant to be seen in public with him, though Kent insinuates that their geographical proximity facilitated liaisons in the privacy of his Vermont studio. Soon after the correspondence began, Ernesta could not be moved to speak of “love” toward him, which prompted Kent to write, sarcastically, that she would feel “wild, passionate, not-to-be-restrained, devouring, and eternal LOVE” for him were he not to lack wealth, a good reputation, and the freedom to marry.<sup>76</sup> As Ernesta wanted no fingers pointed at her for precipitating his divorce from Kathleen, Kent reassured her that the plans for his divorce in

the south of France might escape detection but at any rate would “in no way [be] connected with” her.<sup>77</sup>

The early letters to Ernesta reflect a head-over-heels infatuation for her:

Sweetheart, I cannot write. For nearly two hours I have sat here, abandoned to my thoughts of you. I am drunk with the memory of you—and the hope. “Ernesta,” “Ernesta!” I cry, as if my cry for you might bring you to me; and you, dear heart, dear sweet, sweet love of mine, are of my hands, my lips, my eyes, of every sense awakened into consciousness, and of my ardent spirit, the whole and last desire. Dear girl—I am enveloped by your loveliness.<sup>78</sup>

He wrote of his worship of her<sup>79</sup> and that his “mind [was] on fire with thought of” her.<sup>80</sup> The cycle of hyperbole recurs: “I have no desire to work or to live but that my life and my work may be yours.”<sup>81</sup> Again, “yet but for you I would never have known in all my life what could bring me happiness.”<sup>82</sup>

To win Ernesta’s heart Kent ingratiated himself by taking care of her dog, “Wolfie,” and her horse, “St. Peter,” and by showering her with affectionate letters, gifts, and flowers. He also participated in exercises toward mutual self-improvement such as abstinence from smoking cigarettes. But as Ernesta retreated, Kent’s frustration mounted:

I fear that I have been carried away by my own ardour into reading a love for me even into the utter coldness of your letters. And, dear love, I am just suddenly ashamed. What is more disgusting than to be loved too much!<sup>83</sup>

Kent respected Ernesta’s truthfulness, but his pride could not suffer her cold shoulder:

Ernesta . . . [f]or God’s sake be human; not, of course, by loving me, but by acting feelingly toward me, be it love or hate or indifference. I can’t bear your letters anymore.<sup>84</sup>

Perhaps the most poignant episode of the Ernesta letters is the fairy tale Kent told her of a heart that, “because it was never given away,” abandons its owner and leaves her without one.<sup>85</sup>

The one-sided relationship explains the brooding, melancholic nature of his letters, several of which were written in the span of a single day, and many at night. At times, Kent’s temper flared up such that he apologized the next day. Ashamed after a certain “debauch of the tea,” he sought Ernesta’s forgiveness.<sup>86</sup> His behavior bordered at times on the adolescent:

Yes I have smoked; once, but then wildly. It was yesterday. I was so unhappy! And like a child, I did it in defiance of you. I bought a pack,



smoked half of it: and then in disgust of myself I burned the rest.<sup>87</sup>

As irony would have it, Kent was putting the finishing touches on his drawings for the new edition of *Casanova*. Despite the fact that he earlier had defended Casanova to Ernesta, he now grew disgusted with him.<sup>88</sup> He distinguished his behavior from that of Casanova who, Kent observed, had been swept “into the demoralization of heartless libertinage.”<sup>89</sup>

### The Open Marriage

Kent wanted to legitimize his extramarital activities by establishing what he called a beautiful relationship between his wife and the other woman in his life. This proclivity to enlarge his family began around 1910 with Janet, with whom he had fathered a child.<sup>90</sup> Just as he had wanted his wife, Kathleen, to get to know Janet and, some years later, Hildegarde, he wanted Kathleen to meet Ernesta, so that she could “have the faith” (as he had) “in the wisdom” of what he and Ernesta were doing. “It is horrible when people who have loved each other turn to hating!” Kent wrote to Ernesta.<sup>91</sup> He did not want to divorce Kathleen in anger, but, rather, in understanding: “it is only out of the real affection between us that I would ask for my freedom.”<sup>92</sup>

Marital fidelity was not Kent’s strong suit, and it was an issue which later in life strength-

ened his bonds of friendship with the scholar and defender of civil liberties, Corliss Lamont. Lamont, one of the founders of the Rockwell Kent Collection, wrote about the open marriage in his autobiography. Extramarital sex for both the husband and the wife was to Lamont “a legitimate, life-enhancing activity.” He advocated “taking the lock out of wedlock.”<sup>93</sup>

In considering marriage to Ernesta, as he did with marriage to Hildegarde, Kent pondered the future of his wife and children. He promised he would share his children with the barren Ernesta: “Certainly that I have children is like God’s special gift of atonement to you.”<sup>94</sup> He even wrote about dividing his children up, wondering aloud which of them Ernesta would want: “Barbara, my little pet, you’ll adore. Maybe it is Barbara that we may have.”<sup>95</sup>

The Kent-Ernesta letters end as abruptly as they began. Kent’s 1955 autobiography makes no explicit mention of Ernesta,<sup>96</sup> though it conceals the identity of a love interest who might be Ernesta—“his little problem child” who would reenter his life with the intention of marrying him.<sup>97</sup> However, Kent describes his “problem child” as not “beautiful,” “quite plain,” infuriatingly moody (*her* initially unreciprocated infatuation with *him* causing her to smash china), and not yet divorced.<sup>98</sup> These characterizations run counter to the Ernesta of the Kent-Ernesta letters,

where Kent's infatuation with and devotion to this memorable woman are clearly demonstrated. Yet Kent's concomitant allusions to the wealth<sup>99</sup> of his "problem child" and her "wonderful old house in mountain country"<sup>100</sup> seem to point to Ernesta. Consciously or not, Kent may have altered the facts or fused his recollection of Ernesta with that of another of his contemporaneous *inamorata* in order to obscure the identity of each and to implicate himself in one less affair while still married to Kathleen.

The composer and writer Samuel Barlow knew both Kent and Ernesta. Kent's friendship

with Barlow predates 1924. Barlow and Ernesta married in 1929. During the summer of 1924 Kent paid a visit to Barlow's house in the south of France.<sup>101</sup> Perhaps Barlow introduced the recently-divorced Ernesta to the soon-to-be-divorced Kent at that summer meeting. Kent began sending his amorous letters to her shortly thereafter. Or perhaps it was Kent who introduced Barlow to his future wife sometime in the late 1920s. What is certain is that Samuel Barlow remained married to Ernesta until her passing in 1981.<sup>102</sup>



## Notes

1. Letter from Rockwell Kent ("RK"), Arlington, Vermont, to Ernesta Drinker Bullitt ("EDB"), November 5, 1924. The Rockwell Kent Collection ("RKC").
2. The word *inamorata*, rather than *paramour* or *lover* or *mistress*, is used because it merely indicates that the recipients of Kent's letters were his love interests. Though Kent writes with the conviction of having been physically intimate with both women, the extent of intimacy is unclear, and the absence of reply letters from his *inamorata* further clouds this issue. Though chaste as an adolescent, according to the biography of David Traxel (p. 46), Kent did not shy away from creating a reputation as an amorous sort. For example, in 1914 Kent and/or his coauthor, Frederick Squires, identified by initials thirteen "loves of my lifetime" in the dedicatory page of their humorous book, *Architectonics, The Tales of Tom Thumtack Architect* (New York: The William T. Comstock Company, 1914).
3. Undated letter from RK to EDB, page beginning "After supper." RKC (acquired prior to 1995).
4. Letter from RK to Hildegard Hirsch ("HH"), January 3, 1917. RKC.
5. Letter from RK, Seward, to HH, September 24, 1918, and undated letter from RK to HH, headed by "Monday." Deedy collection.
6. See chapter 4 ("Rebellion") of David Traxel, *An American Saga: The Life and Times of Rockwell Kent* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).
7. Letter from RK to Christian Brinton in the exhibition catalogue of M. Knoedler & Co., *Alaska Drawings by Rockwell Kent* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1919).
8. Rockwell Kent, *Salamina* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1935).
9. Rockwell Kent, *It's Me O Lord* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1955), pp. 319–325.
10. Undated letter from RK to HH headed by "Tuesday morning," which begins, "My sweet and darling Hildegard: I wish you such happiness." RKC. HH performed in a

production number featuring Fannie Brice on July 30, 1917, at The New Amsterdam Theatre, New York City. Together with twenty-three other women—including a "Miss F. Hirsch" (Frieda, perhaps her younger sister)—"H. Hirsch" is listed in the program of the *Ziegfeld Follies* as a performer in the sixth scene, act 1 number, "The Episode of the Ziegfeld Follies Rag." In fact, Hildegard and Frieda Hirsch danced for the *Ziegfeld Follies* at the New Amsterdam Theatre as early as August 3, 1914. Nils Hanson, administrator of the Ziegfeld Club, kindly provided the author with this program information.

11. Undated letter from RK to HH headed by "Tuesday afternoon," which begins: "Now I can write you. . . ." RKC.
12. During their five-year relationship Kent gave Hildegard several gifts, including five reverse paintings on glass, a Jewel Box he carved and painted, a holographic fairy-tale manuscript called *The Jewel, A Romance of Fairyland*, and several small, enchanting watercolors that feature her. Kent refers to Hildegard's "first" marriage in a letter to her from Staten Island dated "April 13th." RKC. The "Frank" referred to in several of the letters, toward whom Kent feels little rivalry, at one time was apparently Hildegard's husband. This author is indebted to the research findings of Eliot H. Stanley contained in the companion volume he edited to the facsimile edition of *The Jewel, A Romance of Fairyland* (Portland, Maine: The Baxter Society, 1991).
13. *The New York Times*, May 21, 1995, H 35.
14. Letter from RK to HH, March 30, 1917. RKC.
15. Undated letter from RK to HH headed by "Saturday night." Author's collection.
16. Letter from RK, Monhegan, to HH, August 9, 1917. RKC.
17. Letter from RK to HH, December 30, 1916. RKC.
18. Letter from RK to HH, June 20, 1917. RKC.
19. *It's Me O Lord*, pp. 21, 270.
20. Letter from RK, Seward, to HH, September 20, 1918. RKC.

21. Undated letter from RK, Staten Island, to Miss Kohler, which begins: "My dear Miss Kohler."
22. Undated letter from RK to HH, headed by "Monday night," where Kent refers to an ink drawing of Hildegarde destined for *Vanity Fair*. Author's collection.
23. Letter from RK to HH, September 26, 1916. RKC.
24. Letter from RK to HH, June 7, 1917. RKC. Frank Crowninshield was the editor-in-chief of *Vanity Fair*.
25. Undated letter from RK to HH, headed by "Wednesday morning," which begins: "My dearest sweetest Love." RKC.
26. Undated Letter from RK to HH, headed by "Sunday afternoon," which begins: "My darling Hildegarde." RKC.
27. Letter from RK to HH, November 24, 1916. RKC. Maeterlinck, the Belgian philosopher-dramatist who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1911, was a favorite subject of the literary forum of the Ferrer Center, a meeting ground for Kent and others, including Carl Zigrosser. In his memoirs, Zigrosser specifically recalled a lecture there by Leonard Abbott on *Pélleas et Mélisande*. See Zigrosser, Carl, *My Own Shall Come to Me*, privately printed in Haarlem, Holland, 1971, p. 70.
28. Letter from RK to HH, November 23, 1916. RKC.
29. Letter from RK, Staten Island, to HH, "April 13th." RKC.
30. Letter from RK to HH, June 12, 1917. RKC.
31. Letter from RK to HH, October 31, 1917. RKC.
32. Undated letter from RK to HH, headed by "Thursday night 8:30." RKC.
33. Letter from RK to HH, November 23, 1916. RKC.
34. Letter from RK to HH, July 26, 1917. RKC. Kent names their future children "little Frieda and Tristan and Masanissa" in an undated letter from RK to HH, which begins: "My own dear Hildegarde:—In two hours." RKC.
35. Letters from RK, Monhegan Island, to HH, August 8 and 9, 1917. RKC.
36. Kent refers to Iceland in his letter to Hildegarde, April 13, 1917. RKC.
37. Letter from RK to Miss Bessie Noseworthy, the Kents' maid in Brigus, Newfoundland. Reproduced in *The Kent Collector*, XVI.3.17.
38. Letter from RK, Monhegan, to HH, August 8, 1917. RKC.
39. Letter from RK, Yakutat, Alaska, to HH, August 1918. RKC.
40. Ibid.
41. Letter from RK, Fox Island/Seward, to HH, September ? [sic], 1918. RKC.
42. Letter from RK, Fox Island, to HH, October 15, 1918. RKC.
43. Letter from RK, Seward, to HH, August 27, 1918. RKC.
44. Letter from RK, Fox Island/Seward, to HH, September 1918. RKC.
45. Letter from RK, Fox Island, to HH, October 7, 1918. RKC.
46. Letter from RK, Seward, to HH, September 20, 1918. RKC.
47. Letter from RK, Seward, to HH, December 2, 1918. RKC.
48. Letter from RK, Alaska, to HH, August -, 1918. RKC.
49. Letter from RK, Fox Island/Seward, to HH, October 15, 1918. RKC.
50. Letter from RK, Seattle, to HH, August 2, 1918. RKC. Letter from RK, aboard S.S. *Admiral Farragut*, to HH, August 21, 1918. RKC.
51. Letter from RK to HH, April 15, 1919. RKC.
52. At Knoedler, Sterner exhibited fifteen of Kent's good-sized Alaska paintings on canvas along with twenty-two paintings of lesser scale, many on wood panels.
53. Chappell lived in Pelham with his wife and four children, including a daughter Jean (b. 1912). Letter from RK to HH, June 7, 1917. RKC.
54. Letter from RK to HH, October 5, 1917. RKC.

55. Under the alias "Hogarth Jr.," Kent continued to collaborate with Chappell well into the 1920s, when their spirited novella *Rollo In Society: A Guide for Youth* was published (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922).

56. Letter from RK to HH, June 7, 1917. RKC.

57. Undated letter from RK to HH, which begins "My own dear Hildegard:—In two hours." RKC.

58. Letter from RK, Monhegan, to HH, October 17, 1917. RKC. Zigrosser had become editor of *The Modern School* by June 1917 and had sought Kent's ink drawings for the cover design, head, and tailpieces, "and a whole alphabet of decorative initials." See Zigrosser's autobiography, *My Own Shall Come To Me*, privately printed in Haarlem, Holland, 1971, p. 80.

59. Letter from RK, Fox Island, to HH, December 26, 1918. RKC.

60. Undated letter from RK to HH, which begins "Time flies. . . ." RKC.

61. Letter from RK to HH, April 24, 1920. RKC.

62. The 1920 manuscript—"A Rosary Of Prayer That Will Follow Her Over Land And Sea Forever"—forms part of the special collections at Princeton University Library, together with a first edition of *Wilderness*. Presumably, Kent gave both in gratitude to Sterner in 1920. Princeton graduate Daniel Weinreb kindly shared with me his research findings toward an as yet unpublished facsimile edition of "A Rosary."

63. Letter from RK to HH, May 12, 1921. RKC. This is the latest letter from RK to HH in RKC and was written to her in Germany, where she was visiting her family.

64. Beaux's portraits of Ernesta as a youth are in the collections of several museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (*Ernesta, Girl in White*) and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Ernesta's sister, Catherine Drinker Bowen, won the National Book Award for her autobiographical account of her accomplished family, *Family Portrait* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1970). Chapter 8 ("Ernesta") reveals that Ernesta's extraordinary physical beauty was largely responsible for some fifty marriage proposals by the time she was twenty-two years old. Ernesta studied as a teenager at a conservatory in Paris.

65. Her diary of this tour, written during the summer of 1916 and published in 1917 as *An Uncensored Diary From the Central Empires* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company), demonstrates her depth and breadth of culture. She converses ably on refugee issues, infant mortality rates, suffrage, and women's rights as factory workers. She also reveals a pungent taste for the macabre, the humorous, and the political. The author acknowledges his indebtedness to John Deedy, who not only shared his Ernesta letters with the author but also brought to his attention newspaper clippings and books by and about the Drinker family.

66. Bullitt divorced Ernesta in 1923 to marry Louise Bryant, John Reed's widow. (They divorced in 1930.) He became head of the Bureau of Central Information of the U.S. Department of State and its specialist on the Russian Revolution. In 1933 he became F.D.R.'s ambassador to Moscow.

67. Ernesta had a country house with an upstairs apartment in Ashfield. Letter from RK to EDB, dated November 15, 1924. RKC. "Egypt," Kent's home near Arlington, had a studio-cabin, his private space, well above the family house overlooking the neighboring Mt. Equinox, which he frequently rendered in his Vermont paintings.

68. The obituary for EDB in the *Gloucester Daily Times*, November 18, 1981, refers to her "flourishing business as an interior decorator" and her "travel and fashion articles" for *Vogue* and *Atlantic Monthly*. Ernesta lived at 132 E. 19th Street and worked at 2 West 47th Street.

69. Undated letter from RK to EDB, letter begins "Monday." Deedy collection.

70. Undated letter from RK to EDB, headed by "Tuesday" and begins "Ernesta, I love you so that I can hardly bear it!"

71. Ibid.

72. Letter from RK to EDB, November 15, 1924. RKC.

73. Undated letter from RK to EDB, headed by "Monday." Deedy collection.

74. Undated letter from RK To EDB, headed by "Tuesday afternoon." RKC.

75. Letter from RK to EDB, November 2, 1924. RKC.

76. Undated letter from RK to EDB, headed by "Friday" and beginning: "I say, my darling." RKC.

77. Letter from RK to EDB, November 16, 1924. RKC.

78. Undated letter from RK to EDB, headed by "Tuesday night" and beginning: "Sweetheart—I can write you nothing." RKC.

79. Undated letter from RK to EDB, headed by "Wednesday" and beginning: "Ernesta my Beloved: suddenly I am quite ashamed of my unworthiness." RKC.

80. Undated letter from RK to EDB, which begins: "Ernesta darling—it is madness—but I cannot sit here with my mind on fire with thought of you—and not write to you." RKC.

81. Undated letter from RK to EDB, headed by "Arlington. Sunday." and beginning: "My darling." RKC.

82. Undated letter from RK to EDB, headed by "Tuesday" and beginning: "Ernesta, my Beloved: Do not be unhappy about me." RKC.

83. Undated letter from RK to EDB, headed by "Saturday night" and beginning: "Ernesta—my darling—I have bravely put off writing you. . . ." RKC.

84. Undated letter from RK to EDB, headed by "Sunday" and beginning: "After breakfast." RKC.

85. The story of the runaway heart appears in an undated letter from RK to EDB, which begins: "And about your heart?" RKC.

86. Undated letter from RK to EDB. Page begins: "After supper." RKC.

87. Undated letter from RK to EDB headed by "Tuesday" and beginning: "Ernesta, I love you so that I can hardly bear it!" RKC.

88. Letter from RK to EDB, dated "Arlington—Nov 4th." RKC.

89. Ibid.

90. In his unsuccessful attempt to incorporate Janet and their newborn son Karl into his household with Kathleen,

Kent is remembered as saying: "I tried to do what Shelley would have done." Traxel, *David*, op. cit., p. 65.

91. Letter from RK to EDB, November 16, 1924. RKC.

92. Letter from RK to EDB, Arlington, November 14, 1924. RKC.

93. See chapter 14 ("Marriage With Variety") of *Yes to Life*, rev. ed. (New York: Crossroads/Continuum Publishing Group, 1991).

94. Letter from RK to EDB, Saturday, November 16, 1924. RKC. Ernesta, who died childless, was apparently unable to bear children.

95. Ibid.

96. In fact, the only explicit reference to Ernesta in any book by or about Kent is the attribution of ownership to her of his 1919 painting—*Summer, Alaska*—reproduced in both *Rockwell Kentiana* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933) and *Rockwell Kent* (New York: American Artists Group, 1945), where Ernesta is, respectively, "Mrs. Ernesta Drinker Bullitt" and "Mrs. Samuel Barlow."

97. *It's Me O Lord*, p. 409.

98. *It's Me O Lord*, pp. 400–1, 409.

99. *It's Me O Lord*, p. 402. Kent's "problem child" was under the care of a psychiatrist only the "very rich" could afford.

100. *It's Me O Lord*, p. 409.

101. *It's Me O Lord*, p. 385. Kent does not say whether Barlow owned or rented the "spectacular" house.

102. Ernesta's obituary, as recorded in the *Gloucester Daily Times*, Gloucester, Massachusetts, November 18, 1981.

## EISENHOWER COMES TO COLUMBIA

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TRAVIS BEAL JACOBS

Amid the pomp and splendor of a medieval pageant, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, the leader of the victorious Allied crusade against Nazi Germany in World War II, was installed as the thirteenth President of Columbia University in the City of New York on October 12, 1948. Nearly 20,000 persons had assembled in front of Low Memorial and Alma Mater to witness the ceremony and the beginning of his second crusade, this one for youth and democratic citizenship. Never had there been such a gathering of American college and university presidents to pay tribute to a new colleague, and they were joined by representatives of thirty-eight foreign universities, including ancient Bologna, Padua, Oxford, and Cambridge, delegates from thirty learned societies, and Columbia's trustees and faculties. Forty-six years earlier Nicholas Murray Butler, in his inaugural address in front of Low Memorial, had declared: "Great personalities make great universities," and he went on to become the greatest university president of the twentieth-century, fulfilling his own prophecy.<sup>1</sup>

The dignitaries marched under overcast skies from Nicholas Murray Butler Library across South Field and 116th Street to the platform, and that afternoon Columbia's prominence was unchallenged in an awesome display of academic brilliance and media attention. Eisenhower, World War II's most popular and widely acclaimed general, had an infectious grin, and his expressive blue eyes conveyed his intensity and vitality; grim and without any trace of his famous smile on the day of his installation, however, he walked in the solemn and slow procession with the University's Provost through the center of the campus and the huge crowd.



In the spring of 1945 Nicholas Murray Butler, eighty-three years old, blind, and almost totally deaf, had been asked by the Trustees to retire. His last Commencement address evoked deep emotions. A colleague movingly described the “noble figure, rising from his chair, thrusting aside the professed arm of a friend, stepping forward for the previously calculated number of steps and delivering his speech, erect and confident as ever.” The thousands of graduates, families, and spectators could glance in every direction and see the University he had created, physically and intellectually, over four decades. In Butler’s day, Dean Young B. Smith of the Law School recalled, he had been a great, able leader who had raised money, attracted outstanding persons to the faculty, built buildings, and had “the dream.” His brilliant leadership had made Columbia one of the world’s most prestigious universities, but the last years of his forty-three-year tenure were tragic and badly weakened the large, complex, urban institution with troubling financial problems.<sup>2</sup>

The Trustees promptly appointed a Special Trustees Committee under Tom Parkinson, president of Equitable Life Assurance, and authorized a faculty committee to suggest names. The search continued, unsuccessfully, through 1946 and into 1947, and Columbia’s failure to name Butler’s successor graphically illustrated the

University’s plight. During this period Butler, who had appointed every member of the Board, remained adamant that Acting President Frank D. Fackenthal, former Secretary and Provost of the University, not be named President. By 1947 even a casual inquiry on the Morningside Heights campus revealed disaffection with the Trustees Committee and its lack of progress in selecting a president to lead Columbia in the postwar world.

Why, then, did General Eisenhower even consider the Columbia presidency? He was one of the dominant figures of his age, and he had other opportunities; moreover, he did not have experience in the field of higher education. Why did the Trustees appoint him? When had he first expressed an interest in coming to Columbia? What interests and educational philosophy would he bring to Columbia? He had demonstrated his administrative skills in the Army, but would they work on the Morningside Heights campus? How did the General view his role as President, and what were his goals? Perhaps the Parkinson Committee assumed that Eisenhower’s immense popularity and prestige would solve easily the financial and leadership problems; perhaps, as Eisenhower’s successor, Grayson Kirk, suggested, “The Search Committee may actually have been unaware of the horrendous financial and other problems that had accumulated during Butler’s last years.”<sup>3</sup>





FIG. 1. General Eisenhower at his installation as Columbia's president, October 12, 1948. He is accompanied by University Provost Albert C. Jacobs. Seated to the General's right are Mamie Eisenhower and John S. D. Eisenhower. *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, vol. 10, p. 409.

On June 19, 1947, syndicated columnist Walter Winchell made the startling announcement in the *New York Daily Mirror*: Columbia wanted Eisenhower, and there was little doubt about the General's decision to leave the Pentagon and accept the University's presidency. Winchell, who knew Eisenhower, declared that he had been "informed by an indisputable source that the resignation

already is in the hands of the President." The following morning *The New York Times*' front page declared that the Chief of Staff would accept the position and that President Harry S. Truman did not object. Frederick Coykendall, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, refused to comment on the report; he indicated, nonetheless, that the Trustees might take some action the next week.<sup>4</sup>

At the Trustees Committee's first meeting in June 1945, only a few weeks after V-E Day and as the country was preparing for General Eisenhower's triumphant return to the United States, "his name spontaneously suggested itself." It seemed "wishful thinking" for, among other things, the Battle of Okinawa still raged in the Pacific, and the proposed invasion of Japan was months off. Journalist Alden Hatch, who during World War II had written *General Ike*, reported shortly after Eisenhower accepted the position that his name kept reappearing before the Committee. In early 1946, Hatch added, the Trustees approached the Chief of Staff through a friend in the War Department, and the General had replied that he had an obligation to fulfill at the Pentagon. Hatch declared that both Mamie Eisenhower and the General's brother, Milton S. Eisenhower, President of Kansas State University, had read "every word" of the article before publication. In March 1946, IBM's Tom Watson, a Trustee but not on the Special Committee, traveled to the Pentagon to ask the Chief of Staff to speak at the Diamond Jubilee opening at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The General accepted, later observing, "it does seem a bit ridiculous that they should want a soldier in such surroundings."<sup>5</sup>

The Faculty Committee, meanwhile, under the leadership of Dean George B. Pegram of the Graduate Faculties, began the

arduous task of considering nearly 200 nominations. Over Labor Day weekend, 1945, the Committee completed its report on the eight "most promising" candidates and, as Fackenthal specifically commented, "the faculty pretty much preferred somebody with an academic background." The list was impressive, and each of the eight would continue to enjoy a long, successful, and distinguished professional career, but, as Columbia College's Dean Harry J. Carman recalled, "In due time the Trustees advised us that no one of the eight seemed satisfactory." The Committee's second report in May 1946 included the recommendation of Fackenthal, even if for "only a short time" before his retirement. The Trustees, however, essentially "disregarded completely" the work of some of the University's most respected leaders, and the role of the Pegram Committee came to an end.<sup>6</sup>

During that summer individual Trustees began their own search, and Watson again mentioned the General's name after the Metropolitan Museum's celebration. That fall President James Phinney Baxter III of Williams College declined the presidency, and then President Robert G. Sproul of the University of California at Berkeley embarrassed Columbia by publicly doing so. Watson again talked with Eisenhower in early 1947, and the General was honored in February at Columbia's Special Convocation for America's World War II heroes.

The Trustees also approached Milton Eisenhower during this period. For years a favorite story on campus was that the Trustees, meaning Watson and Parkinson, chose the wrong Eisenhower. The legend, as the distinguished international law professor and diplomat Philip Jessup commented, held that the Trustees were discussing candidates and someone suggested a call to Robert M. Hutchins, the brilliant Chancellor of the University of Chicago. "He in his usual abrupt way said that Eisenhower was the best man, meaning Milton of course, and this was immediately picked on by Tom Watson, who thought this was marvelous and forthwith went and asked Ike." Trustee Dodge, indeed, talked with the Kansas State University President, who expressed no interest, since other Trustees already had mentioned the Columbia position to his brother. By this time the General, after "months" of pressure, had agreed that "if and when I left the military service, I would at least confer with the Board of Trustees before I made any move." While he had been worrying about his post-Chief of Staff career far more than his recollection in *At Ease* (1967) implied, pressure on Morningside Heights was mounting for Parkinson's Committee to act. As the search ended its second year, two prominent educators had declined the position, and the search for an Eisenhower seemed to be at an end. Helen Reid, president of the New York

Tribune, Inc. and a Trustee of Barnard College, saw the University "drifting"; a top administrator reflected that, in spite of Butler's aversion, the situation "would have been much better" for Columbia, if Fackenthal had been "appointed President until a permanent selection was made."<sup>7</sup>

Soon, Parkinson Committee members began approaching candidates simultaneously, and its efforts for a new president fell into disarray. As the impatience and concern of other Trustees grew, they requested a Special Meeting of the Board before Commencement; the Committee also agreed to report on Professor Jessup, recommended on the original faculty list. It is difficult to reconstruct the sequence of events between the agreement in early May for a special meeting, soon scheduled for May 27, and the decision of the Board on June 2 to offer the presidency to General Eisenhower. It is extremely unlikely that the Parkinson Committee itself had mentioned Jessup. Dodge knew that "a quarter of the Board" was "not ready to vote definitely for Dr. Jessup at this time," and he was particularly concerned that "whatever we do it will not be embarrassing," because of Jessup's prominence.

When twenty Trustees gathered in Low Memorial on May 27, they learned that Committee members would meet in the next twenty-four hours with Eisenhower—Watson knew that this would be his last chance to



persuade the General—and Arthur Compton, a Nobel Prize recipient and President of Washington University in St. Louis. The Committee had put itself in a position where either a “yes” or “no” vote on Jessup would be awkward and terribly embarrassing; consequently, it proposed that no formal discussion take place.<sup>8</sup> When Committee members met the next noon at the Downtown Association, several Trustees indicated to Assistant Treasurer Joseph Campbell their understanding that Compton would be offered the position. The Trustees at the luncheon, knowing that Watson already had pressed Eisenhower for an answer, should have been terribly uneasy.<sup>9</sup>

“Watson came to see me and this time seemed to be speaking with somewhat more authority,” Eisenhower confided to Milton Eisenhower, saying that Watson had urged him “to take over the job once I have been relieved as Chief of Staff.” The IBM president emphasized “the importance of public service” and “built up the rosier picture of what I would be offered in the way of conveniences, expenses, remuneration and so on.” While insisting that he lacked experience and “was *not* the one in the family best qualified,” Eisenhower’s comments—and Watson’s hopes—sufficiently encouraged the Trustee. Watson soon learned that the General and Mrs. Eisenhower would be at West Point for Reunions and to deliver the Commencement address on June 3, and

he informed Eisenhower’s Pentagon office that he would drive to the Academy on June 2. Parkinson, meanwhile, called for a Special Meeting of the Board for that morning.<sup>10</sup>

Sixteen Trustees met and “counted noses and voted” to authorize Parkinson and Watson to go to West Point and offer the presidency to Eisenhower. Five members expressed their opinion that the General should not be the next President of Columbia and, significantly, three of them were on Parkinson’s Search Committee of Five: the Chairman of the Board, Coykendall; the Clerk of the Board, Dodge; and Rector Frederick Fleming of Trinity Church; the other two were Doubleday’s Douglas Black and Albert G. Redpath, a long-time director of the *Columbia Law Review* and founding partner of a stock brokerage firm. Ultimately, Watson, who did not have the authority of a Search Committee member, had made too many commitments on behalf of the Board for the Trustees to say, “No.” Thus, Watson and Parkinson, in spite of the opinion of a majority of the Search Committee, received the authority they coveted, and they departed immediately for West Point. The Board did attach one condition: If Eisenhower accepted, he would have to assume office within twelve months.<sup>11</sup>

The rosy picture Watson had painted about Columbia for Eisenhower became even more beautiful at West Point, when he and Parkinson talked with the General. “In a

moment of weakness,” Eisenhower later confided to Dean Carman, “I listened to the blandishments of a couple of your Trustees.” When the Chief of Staff told them that “the President of Columbia should be a scholar of renown, one who knows his way around the academic world,” the Trustees replied that they were “seeking a leader. . . . We have many fine scholars on campus.” They added that he “wouldn’t have anything to do with curriculum, or faculty, or any of that sort of thing.”<sup>12</sup>

During the next two weeks Watson gave even more assurances, and for some reason the General seemed willing to listen seriously and uncritically. Neither he nor his brother, the president of a large state university, questioned them; indeed, Milton expressed his happiness “about the general direction things are taking.” Grayson Kirk has found it “difficult to understand how Eisenhower, with Milton as an academically experienced adviser, could have been so naive to believe the Trustees’ assurances.” Soon Eisenhower agreed to meet at Columbia with the Trustee Committee and then with the University’s deans and directors.<sup>13</sup>

Late Friday afternoon, June 20, and into the early evening, Fackenthal telephoned the deans and directors and asked them to be in the Trustees Room in Low Memorial on Saturday afternoon—it was an unusual request, and many had departed for the

weekend or summer. The Acting President opened the meeting by stating that Eisenhower would be elected President on the 24th, and then Coykendall, Parkinson, and Watson led the General through the double doors into the Trustees Room. An informal conversation followed and, when Eisenhower began smoking, contrary to custom, one dean found a metal wastepaper basket for an ashtray. Toward the end of the meeting Mrs. Watson and Mrs. Eisenhower joined the group.<sup>14</sup>

Earlier General and Mrs. Eisenhower had met with the Trustees Committee, and he had said, “Yes.” At the same time the Trustees decided that Professor of Law Albert C. Jacobs, who had been recommended in the Pegram Committee’s second report and had been the Assistant to the President for a year, should become Provost. The decision had been discussed “very carefully” with Eisenhower, and Jacobs was told he would have “complete charge of the whole academic program at Columbia.” As Arthur Hays Sulzberger, publisher of *The New York Times* and an influential Trustee, subsequently stated, the Trustees considered Eisenhower and Jacobs a “team.”<sup>15</sup>

The reasons for Eisenhower’s sudden willingness to accept the presidency are complex and, in light of his career, perplexing. He knew he would retire from the Army when his term as Chief of Staff ended in 1948.

According to Doug Black, who would become one of Eisenhower's closest and most trusted friends, the salesmanship of Watson had led him to Columbia. He "wanted to be close to Ike . . . the biggest figure of the day . . . to be in on the whatever." The IBM president, an ardent Democrat, harbored presidential ambitions for Eisenhower and knew that the prestige of an academic position offered innumerable advantages for a general. In any event, Watson had discovered the perfect way to approach Eisenhower by emphasizing "an opportunity for real service" and by specifically minimizing fund-raising and the presidential responsibilities of leading a large university. "The Trustees misled him badly," Grayson Kirk has emphasized, and he remained "grumpy about it" for several years.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, he had doubts within hours of leaving the Low Memorial meeting and, the day before the Board was to meet and formally elect him, he expressed his concerns in a long letter to Parkinson. "I have been assured by all of you that in undertaking this task I would have a minimum of concern with details and that I would be largely master of my own time and activity." Mincing no words, the General asserted: "I am anxious that before the Board meets tomorrow, all of its members understand very clearly the general picture you, Mr. Watson, and the others have painted to me of the basic purpose lying behind my selection."

That basic purpose was "to devote my energies in providing internal leadership on broad and liberal lines for the University itself and to promote basic concepts of education in a democracy." He wanted "no misunderstandings of any kind."<sup>17</sup>

An amazing letter. Had he, perhaps during the meeting with the deans and directors, begun to sense the dimension of the task? Had he unrealistically expected to be merely a presiding officer, and was he beginning to understand that the demands were far greater and more complex than he had been led to believe? Had he recalled over the weekend a three-hour luncheon he had had earlier in the year at the Pentagon with Columbia's Eli Ginzberg? Before Professor Ginzberg had had a chance to discuss a proposed military manpower study, the General mentioned that Columbia's Trustees were talking with him. When Eisenhower added that it would be attractive not to have to raise funds, Ginzberg bluntly replied: "I don't know how stupid those trustees are but I think they are not so stupid, they are just lying in their teeth. . . . We're in very bad shape." Ginzberg described "a not altogether pretty picture about Columbia for him" and had given the General a clear warning.<sup>18</sup>

The General expressed clearly his terms for Columbia and was, in effect, issuing an ultimatum to the Board. Yet, as hard a bargain as he might drive—and he literally gave



Parkinson the choice of agreeing or subjecting the University to a monstrous embarrassment after all the publicity—he was missing the point as much as Watson and Parkinson had missed it. The type of presidency they offered in no way could meet the challenges Columbia confronted. The Chief of Staff and former Supreme Commander, who had skillfully forged a wartime coalition, should have known, in spite of what he had been told, that one cannot run such an organization and be master of his “own time and activity.”

Parkinson decided to read only “some parts” of Eisenhower’s letter to the Board of Trustees on June 24; he deliberately misled them, just as he and Watson had misled Eisenhower about his responsibilities as President. Only he and Watson knew the extent of the assurances they had given the General; nonetheless, he asserted that the Committee was in full agreement with Eisenhower. The Trustees voted by secret ballot, and the Minutes do not indicate that he was elected unanimously; interestingly, however, the Bylaws for the election of new Trustees were suspended “unanimously,” and the Clerk was “instructed to cast one ballot for General Eisenhower.” The five Trustees who had not supported his selection on June 2 were present. Black remained annoyed, “miffed,” about the way it was “rushed in on about two weeks’ notice,” and he knew “there would be resentment among the faculty,

because they hadn’t been consulted. They weren’t carried away, as all the Trustees were.”<sup>19</sup> Only a few of the Trustees had even met Eisenhower.

The extensive media coverage of Eisenhower’s appointment gave Columbia a publicity coup throughout the country and the world—a fantastic recovery after an almost disastrous presidential search. Columbia’s President-designate, moreover, had the energy and administrative skills that could rejuvenate the University and meet the postwar challenges, and his charisma and commitment to the youth of America could bring to Columbia a vitality missing for nearly two decades. The appointment “greatly pleased” Butler; although it went against his principles to name a nonacademic person, it appealed immensely to his pride to have such a distinguished successor.

On Morningside Heights, however, the news did not always receive positive endorsement. It was known that Deans Pegram and Smith had little enthusiasm; Carman, not disagreeing, observed that if the faculty’s response had been sought, “there would have been lifting of eyebrows and wonderment on the part of some.” One day, soon after the announcement, Professor Harry Morgan Ayres listened to the doubts some of his colleagues were expressing. After a few minutes, he said thoughtfully, “You have forgotten one thing, gentlemen—the Guildhall speech General

Eisenhower delivered in London” after V-E Day. The highly respected literature expert continued: “I believe that to be one of the greatest speeches ever made in the English language. Only a fine scholar could have written that.” That fall Columbia opened its 194th academic year with a sense of relief. The long interregnum would end soon with Eisenhower’s arrival. The *Columbia Spectator*, calling his appointment “the happiest event in many years” at the University, concluded: “Columbia was fortunate, indeed, in obtaining the services of Dwight D. Eisenhower.”<sup>20</sup> Few seemed to worry that a definite date for his arrival had not been set.

The Eisenhowers visited the campus briefly in September, and that fall the General worried about Columbia, in spite of widespread interest in him as a possible 1948 presidential candidate, the intensifying Cold War, and proposals for publishing his wartime memoirs. The horrible demands of his new position dismayed the General, according to the *New York Herald Tribune*’s Bill Robinson, who would be instrumental with Doug Black in publishing *Crusade in Europe*. “Eisenhower was, consequently, not very pleased about his decision. He then was startled to learn that Chairman Coykendall had not seen his blunt letter to Parkinson; yet the General still refused to acknowledge, even slightly, that he himself had not done his homework and had gone into battle unprepared. When

Eisenhower finally realized his predicament, probably only the continuous efforts of Watson and Parkinson kept him from changing his mind about Columbia that fall. When once again personally reassured, he told Coykendall that the University could announce that he would arrive around May 1, 1948.<sup>21</sup>

In January the Eisenhower boom for President in 1948 erupted, and the possibility of Eisenhower’s political availability, commented upon almost daily by the media, was unsettling for Columbia. Leonard Finder, the *Manchester Union-Leader* publisher, proposed that a slate of Eisenhower delegates would be entered in the March New Hampshire presidential primary, and public opinion polls indicated that he had “more popular backing than any other Republican and actually more than Truman.” Eisenhower ended the speculation by declaring that “he could not accept nomination,” and CBS’s Eric Sevareid emphasized that now “the whole political situation is radically different.”<sup>22</sup> A few days later Eisenhower went on leave from the Army and, avoiding public appearances, began writing his memoirs at breathtaking speed; on May 2, after completing the draft and a golfing vacation at Augusta National, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower received a farewell salute at Fort Myers and departed for his new residence, the President’s House at 60 Morningside Drive.

When President-designate Eisenhower walked into his office on May 3, he had to have sensed, quickly, that the academic year, 1947–1948—the year the University had waited for his arrival—had been difficult. In addition to the mounting budget deficit and the need to reorganize the administration, the issue of freedom of speech on the Columbia campus had stirred up critical publicity in the Cold War atmosphere of 1948. The former Chief of Staff suddenly became associated with academic freedom controversies at a time when members of both the Republican and Democratic parties were intensifying their pressure on him to become a presidential candidate.

The Eisenhower “boom” rapidly regained strength with the publicity generated by his arrival at Columbia—and by a series of speeches in and around New York City—and it overshadowed nearly everything he did at Columbia and disrupted the University. On Sunday, June 6, the fourth anniversary of D-Day, the *New York Herald Tribune* featured an article on Eisenhower, D-Day, and Columbia. That same day Pulitzer-prize winning historian Allan Nevins predicted in *The New York Times* that with Eisenhower’s arrival Columbia’s “greatest years lie before her.” Also on the 6th a Roper Poll showed that Eisenhower could win the presidency as either a Democrat or a Republican and that voters in both political parties preferred him over any other candi-

date. Some 20,000 letters, postcards, and telegrams urged his candidacy and overwhelmed his staff in Low Memorial Library.<sup>23</sup>

With the Republican Party’s nomination of New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey in late June, many Democrats and New Dealers desperately turned to General Eisenhower. Few believed that the badly divided Democrats could win with Truman, and politicians “made the pilgrimage” to his office; Trustees Parkinson and Watson, who saw Columbia as “a stepping stone” for him, as a Democrat, to the White House, did not need to line up to see him. With a crowd outside 60 Morningside over the July 4th weekend shouting “We Like Ike,” he issued a statement that, “I will not, at this time . . . accept nomination for any public office.” Still, the pressure continued, and four days later he added: “No matter under what terms, . . . I would refuse to accept the nomination.”<sup>24</sup>

During these distracting weeks he had checked the final stages of his manuscript, opened the University’s 49th summer session, introduced Eleanor Roosevelt at the Summer Session Institute, and told some 600 alumni that the University “needs lots of money. . . . Why should \$170,000,000 scare us?” On July 15 he held an informal stag dinner for sixteen Trustees at 60 Morningside, and he particularly emphasized a proposed development plan and recommendations for reorganizing the administration. Afterward, he asked

Provost Jacobs to have material ready for discussion with the Trustees when he returned in September from an extended vacation in Colorado. “That summer, I admit,” Jacobs later commented, Eisenhower “should have been around and he wasn’t.”<sup>25</sup>

A sense of excitement permeated Morningside Heights, as Eisenhower opened Columbia’s 195th academic year. He welcomed a capacity audience in McMillin Theatre, addressed the opening exercises at Barnard, spoke at Columbia’s first all-College assembly since the outbreak of the war, and attended the traditional dinner for freshmen in John Jay Hall, which *Spectator* called “the most outstanding of its kind since World War II.” He had a number of important matters to prepare for the Trustees at his first official Board Meeting. He went to Baker Field and was photographed with football coach Lou Little at practice; a week later *The New York Times* reported that “a famed new rooster” joined 28,000 fans in “the largest gathering” to watch the launching of a new season—and Columbia won. Then in late September, at the end of an extremely busy day in Low Memorial, he made one of his remarkable speaking appearances. He had had no time to read the notes prepared for him for the opening convocation at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the Provost recalled with admiration that Eisenhower delivered “a brilliant address without a note.”<sup>26</sup>

It was an auspicious beginning that September for the eminent institution approaching its Bicentennial in 1954, and Eisenhower’s actions sharply illustrated the change in atmosphere and the prominence he brought to his new position. His enthusiasm and his pleasure in talking with students were obvious, and his presence infused a vitality and a spirit of optimism unknown on Morningside Heights since the heyday of Nicholas Murray Butler. “His marvelous smile, humor, humility, downright honesty, and great wisdom,” Dean Carman wrote, “combine to make him an almost perfect fit for mid-twentieth century America.” On the eve of his installation, *The New York Times’* education editor reported that Columbia under Eisenhower would launch “the most ambitious expansion program ever undertaken by any college or university. . . . It is almost staggering.”<sup>27</sup>

That weekend Eisenhower and Columbia completed preparations for his installation on Tuesday. Columbia had offered him a public forum in the cultural, business, and communications center of the world and, while he was not an academic and made no pretense of being one, a strong speech could show his determination and ability to lead the great University. It could, moreover, convey his passionate concern about the challenge America faced in the growing Cold War. Columbia, furthermore, had given him in his first few months some important



issues to discuss, such as academic freedom. That morning the *Spectator* declared: "Columbia is aware it must grow and improve to meet the need of the nation and the world. . . . No man is better suited to meet that challenge."<sup>28</sup>

The tolling of bells in St. Paul's Chapel began shortly before two o'clock on October 12, and the gray, overcast skies could not mute the richly colored robes and hoods of distinguished scholars and educators from throughout the country and the world. Between the great columns of Low Memorial hung pendant blue banners, and other University buildings were decked with blue-and-white banners and the Stars and Stripes. After the procession had climbed slowly the steps to the platform in front of Alma Mater and Low Memorial, the installation began. As Chairman Coykendall rose for the traditional presentation of the University's Charter and Keys, the sun burst through the clouds, and blue skies appeared. "The cloud rack dispersed," a reporter wrote. "Skylike blue water showed through the openings. The sun hit on edges of clouds. It burnished the crown and eagle perched on the flagpoles." As Eisenhower grasped "the giant-size ring with the giant-size keys, the sun pounced on them and set them afire."<sup>29</sup>

"The soldier who becomes an educator," he began, "finds himself . . . engaged in a new

phase of his fundamental life purpose," and he asserted that in "today's challenge to freedom . . . every institution within our national structure must contribute to the advancement [of] democratic citizenship." He continued:

From the school at the crossroads to a university as great as Columbia, general education for citizenship must be the common and first purpose of them all. . . . To assign the university the mission of ever strengthening the foundations of our culture is to ennoble the institution and confirm the vital importance of its service.

As he neared the end of his twenty-minute address, he declared:

There will be no administrative suppression or distortion of any subject that merits a place in this University's curricula. The facts of communism, for example, shall be taught here. . . . Ignorance of communism, fascism, or any other police-state philosophy is far more dangerous than ignorance of the most virulent disease.

"Columbia University," he specifically concluded, "will forever be bound by its loyalty to truth and the basic concepts of democratic freedom." From the University will come scholars, statesmen, skilled professionals, and





FIG. 2. *Eisenhower chats with the Columbia football team. Coach Lou Little is in the foreground at left.* *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, vol. 10, p. 409.

great leaders in every area, “but Columbia shall count it failure, whatever their success, if they are not all their lives a leaven of better citizenship.”<sup>30</sup>

That evening Edward R. Murrow reported on CBS News that Eisenhower, among “the colorful robes and hoods of the Universities of Rome, Oxford, Paris, San Marcos, Iran and all the rest,” at first, “seemed rather out of place in that colorful academic setting.” And, when he began speaking, “you realized that this was something considerably out of the ordinary

for a speech by a College President. Here was no display of synthetic erudition, no labored effort to be complicated.” Eisenhower, the prominent broadcaster declared, was “laying it on the line, so that all could understand,” emphasizing “those fundamentals that make our society free.” It was “quite a speech. . . . Those words, spoken in the Cold War atmosphere by a lesser man would have produced the cry of ‘subversive’ or ‘un-American’ in some well-advertised quarters. That charge is not likely to be leveled against Eisenhower.”

Others agreed with Murrow's positive assessment, from the *New York Daily Mirror* to *The Times* and *Newsweek*, which suggested that even the recently deceased Nicholas Murray Butler "seemed to feel that the irresistible Eisenhower could replace the irreplaceable Butler."<sup>31</sup>

Eisenhower's whirlwind schedule continued throughout the fall, generating enthusiastic responses from Homecoming with 35,000 fans at Baker Field to dinners downtown and the publication of *Crusade in Europe*, which received critical acclaim. As hard as it was to believe, his installation and the publication of his wartime memoirs had made him even more popular, and Truman's stunning upset over Dewey had thrown the General back into the spotlight of political speculation. Warning signs, however, had started to appear on the horizon at Morningside Heights. It was becoming known that his staff was making him inaccessible for the Columbia community and that he had appeared very uncomfortable at academic functions. It was not known that he had been promised he "would be largely master" of his "own time and activity" and that responsibility for the University's academic program had been delegated to the Provost. The General knew, moreover, that President Truman wanted to call him back to duty at the Pentagon because of the growing Cold War tensions and the problems of military unifica-

tion; he did not know whether it might be "a temporary assignment" or "short term" and how disruptive it would be for Columbia—no one could foresee that he would miss the entire spring semester.

Still, the fall had been exhilarating and rewarding for both him and Columbia. When he finished his installation address, the sun was still shining, and Mamie Eisenhower, who later recalled the ceremonies as "touching" and "inspiring," considered the sun's appearance a "very good omen."<sup>32</sup> In the fall of 1948 few doubted Columbia's greatness or her bright future under President Eisenhower.

## Notes

1. *The New York Times*, October 13, 1948. Middlebury College and the Earhart Foundation have generously supported my research on Eisenhower at Columbia.
2. Albert Marrin, *Nicholas Murray Butler*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), p. 52; Young B. Smith, personal interview, April 26, 1959, Columbia University.
3. For years it was understood that the *Minutes* and records of the Faculty Committee had been destroyed. See Carl W. Ackerman MSS, August 5, 1947, Library of Congress (LC). During research for my manuscript on Eisenhower's presidency, the records of the Faculty Committee and correspondence of the Trustees Special Committee were located in Columbia's Central Archives (CACU) in Low Memorial. Grayson Kirk to author, March 13, 1992.
4. *Daily Mirror*, June 19, 1947; *The New York Times*, June 20, 1947.
5. Alden Hatch, "The Prexy Plan of General Ike," *Collier's*, September 23, 1947; unmarked folder, Trustees Special Committee (TSC), CACU; Eisenhower to Milton Eisenhower, March 15, 1946, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: Chief of Staff (PDDE)*, vol. 7, ed. Louis Galambos (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1978), 942–44.
6. "Report of the Special Committee," September 5, 1945, and Pegram Committee Report, May 17, 1946, CACU; Frank D. Fackenthal, Columbia Oral History Project (COHP), 1956; Harry J. Carman, personal interviews, January 30, 1958, and December 1, 1961, Columbia University. Ironically, the Committee's only recommendation that was accepted was its negative report on Butler's candidate.
7. Philip Jessup, personal interview, June 17, 1977, Norfolk, Connecticut; Milton S. Eisenhower, personal interview, July 26, 1972, Baltimore, Maryland; Eisenhower, *At Ease* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), p. 336; Helen Reid to Dodge, May 5, 1947, TSC Folder, CACU; Albert C. Jacobs, personal interview, February 5, 1965, Hartford, Connecticut.
8. Dodge to Parkinson, May 12, 1947, TSC folder, CACU; The Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York, *Minutes*, May 27, 1947, *ibid.*, Eisenhower to Milton Eisenhower, May 29, 1947, *PDDE*, vol. 7, 1716, 1737–38; Douglas Black, personal interview, June 6, 1973, New York, New York.
9. Joseph Campbell to author, February 2, 1964.
10. Eisenhower to Milton Eisenhower, May 29, 1947, *PDDE*, vol. 8, 1737–38; Black, interview, June 6, 1973.
11. Trustees, *Minutes*, June 2, 1947, CACU. The *Minutes* do not mention the vote. Black, interview, June 6, 1973.
12. Carman, interview, December 1, 1961.
13. Eisenhower to Milton Eisenhower, June 14, 1947, *PDDE*, vol. 8, 1759; Kirk to author, March 13, 1992.
14. Harry Morgan Ayres, "Recollections of June 21, 1947," Eisenhower Files, Columbian, Low Memorial, Columbia University.
15. Albert C. Jacobs, "Memorandum" to author, March 10, 1958; Arthur Hays Sulzberger, personal interview, March 27, 1958.
16. Black, interview, June 6, 1973; Kirk to author, March 13, 1992.
17. Eisenhower to Parkinson, June 23, 1947, *PDDE*, vol. 8, 1775–76.
18. Eli Ginzberg, personal interview, December 11, 1990, New York, New York.
19. Trustees, *Minutes*, June 24, 1947, CACU; Black, interview, June 6, 1973.
20. *The New York Times*, June 25, 1947; Fackenthal, 1956, COHP; Carman, interview, December 1, 1961; Ayres, "Memorandum," Columbian; editorial, "President 'Ike,'" *Columbia Spectator*, September 25, 1947.
21. *The New York Times*, September 12, 1947; William E. Robinson, "Confidential Notes," October 17, 1947, Robinson MSS, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (DDEL); Eisenhower to Coykendall, November 12 and 22, 1947, *PDDE*, vol. 9, 2055–57, 2078–80.

22. Eisenhower, *At Ease*, pp. 334–35; *PDDE*, vol. 9, footnote 1, 2193; Eric Sevareid, CBS News, Eisenhower MSS, DDEL.
23. William Zinsser, “Columbia Confronts Eisenhower with a Complex, Difficult Job” and Roper Poll, *New York Herald Tribune*, June 6, 1948; Allan Nevins, “University City within a City,” *The New York Times*, June 6, 1947; “Political Mail,” August 9, 1948 and Robert K. Merton to Eisenhower, Jacobs, and Pegram, memorandum, September 1949, Eisenhower MSS. DDEL.
24. Marquis Childs, *Eisenhower: Captive Hero* (New York, 1958), pp. 112–13; Childs, “Why Ike Said No,” *Collier’s*, August 28, 1948, pp. 14–15, 76–77; Jacobs, interview, February 5, 1965; *The New York Times*, July 5, 1948; Eisenhower to James Roosevelt, July 8, 1948, *PDDE*, vol. 10, 129–31.
25. *The New York Times*, June 12, 1948; Jacobs to Eisenhower, memoranda, July 14 and 15, 1948, CACU; Eisenhower to Jacobs, July 19, 1948, *PDDE*, vol. 10, 152–56; Jacobs, interview, February 5, 1965.
26. *Columbia Spectator*, September 23, 24, and 29, 1948; *The New York Times*, September 23 and 26, 1948; Jacobs, memorandum, March 10, 1958.
27. Harry J. Carman to Father Ford, November 2, 1948, Carman MSS, Butler Library, Columbia University; Benjamin Fine, “Education in Review,” *The New York Times*, October 10, 1948.
28. Editorial, “A Great Man . . . Meets a Great Challenge,” *Spectator*, October 12, 1948.
29. Meyer Berger, “Rich Color and Solemn Pageantry of Middle Ages Greet Eisenhower,” and Russell Porter, “Eisenhower Takes Office at Columbia: Stresses Freedom,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 1948.
30. “Text of Eisenhower’s Speech,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 1948.
31. Edward R. Murrow, “With the News,” October 12, 1948, DDEL; *New York Daily Mirror* and *The New York Times*, October 13, 1948; *Newsweek*, October 18, 1948. Butler died on December 7, 1947.
32. Mamie D. Eisenhower, personal interview, December 17, 1975, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

## OUR GROWING COLLECTIONS

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### RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY

*Butcher Gift:* Philip Butcher, a scholar and literary historian who has written extensively on George Washington Cable, Adelene Moffat, Sterling A. Browne, and William Stanley Braithwaite added several boxes of books, manuscripts, and correspondence to the personal papers already in the Library. In addition, he donated typed copies of the diaries and journals he kept during his military service in World War II, along with supporting correspondence and clippings, some 300 pages in all of documentation of the war experience.

*Lawrynenko Gift:* The Rare Book and Manuscript Library was pleased to add to its collections more than twenty-eight linear feet of papers and records from the Ukrainian literary historian and critic Yurii Lawrynenko, a gift of Maria Lawrynenko through her daughter Larissa Lawrynenko. Along with copies of his many articles and his 1985 memoir, *Chorna purha* (The Black Blizzard), the personal archives include audio tapes of his broadcasts for Radio Free Europe and materials deriving from his documentation of Displaced Person camps in the years following World War II.

*Kelleher Gift:* Mary Moore Kelleher added to her earlier donations of the papers and artifacts of her father, the composer and Columbia professor Douglas Moore, several amusing programs and documents recording Moore's participation in amateur summer theater as a high school student, as well as his handwritten log, or record book, written as an adult, of the performances of his early works.

*Kennedy Bequest:* The late Sighle Kennedy bequeathed to Columbia her research and study collection of items related to Irish literature in general and Samuel Beckett in particular, including several autograph letters to her from the novelist-playwright. Ms. Kennedy spent much of her life investigating the impact of Dante on Beckett. Her legacy, which included as well the books, monographs and correspondence about the topic she had assembled since her years as a graduate student at Columbia, promises to provide a useful resource for those engaged in similar topics of study in modern literature.

*Latouche Purchase:* Proceeds from the endowment established in memory of the late Brander Matthews, a member of the Columbia English Department faculty from 1891 until 1924 and the first professor of drama in the United States, allowed the Library to purchase an important group of papers and diaries of the lyricist John



Latouche, who died at the age of thirty-eight in 1956. Latouche, who left his native Richmond to attend Columbia on a scholarship, wrote a series of Broadway musicals including *Cabin in the Sky*, *The Golden Apple*, and *Banjo Eyes*. He won national prominence in 1939 as the coauthor, with Earl Robinson, of *Ballad for Americans*, later recorded by Paul Robeson. At the time of his death, Latouche had just completed revisions of the book for Douglas Moore's opera *The Ballad of Baby Doe*.

*Lorentz Gift:* Mrs. Pare Lorentz has added to the growing collection of papers, scripts, and archival materials from the files of her late husband, the documentary filmmaker Pare Lorentz. Lorentz, who was the subject of an exhibition held in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library this summer, was the controversial and gifted director of *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, *The River*, *Ecce Homo*, and other films recording the look and mood of America in the 1930s and 1940s. The latest batch of papers includes correspondence and office files from his later years, as well as a group of thirty books on nuclear energy, one of his last concerns.

*Perkins Family Gift:* Anne Perkins Cabot, Penelope Perkins Wilson, and George W. Perkins Jr. gave to the Rare Book and Manuscript Library a substantial collection of papers relating to the career of their father, George Walbridge Perkins III (M.A., 1921), a diplomat and civic leader who spent many years in public service. Perkins, an executive vice president and director of Merck & Co.,

Inc., from 1927 until his death in 1960, was Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs from 1949 until 1953. He also served from 1955 until 1957 as the United States Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council and Organization for European Economic Cooperation with the rank of ambassador.

Much of Perkins' life was devoted to carrying on the family legacy of interest in the Palisades Interstate Park, founded early in the century by his father, George Walbridge Perkins (whose papers also reside at Columbia). George W. Perkins III served on the Palisades Interstate Parkway Commission for forty years, holding the position of president from 1945 until his death in 1960.

*Saxon Gift:* The cartoons and drawings of the late Charles Saxon (B.A., 1940), have long added luster to the Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Mrs. Nancy Saxon, the donor, has enhanced the Saxon collection once again by a recent gift of 208 watercolors and sketches.

*Stark Gift:* James Stark arranged for the gift of three linear feet of books, articles, clippings, and reviews by and about Eugen Loeb, whose earlier papers are included in the Bakhmeteff Archive of Russian and East European History and Culture. The Czech Minister of Foreign Trade in 1948, Loeb was arrested, tried, and imprisoned in 1951. He came to the United States in 1968, where he taught economics and wrote extensively on economics and world affairs.

## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

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JAKE MILGRAM WIEN, graduate of Stanford (A.B., 1974), Oxford (M.Phil., 1976) and Berkeley (J.D., 1984), has written extensively on the life and art of Rockwell Kent. He is working on a study of Kent's reverse paintings on glass and on a full account of Kent's artistic achievement in Greenland, 1929–1935. Wien organized and curated *The Vanishing American Frontier*, an exhibition of the historical lithographs of Bernarda Bryson Shahn which concluded its museum tour at Bryn Mawr College in April 1996.

TRAVIS BEAL JACOBS received his Ph.D. in history from Columbia University (1971) and is Fletcher D. Procter Professor of American History at Middlebury College. His publications include coediting the diaries of Adolf A. Berle Jr., *Navigating the Rapids*, and he is completing a manuscript of Eisenhower's Presidency at Columbia.

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